

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0080

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: CHOU EN-LAI'S DEATH: THE LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

1. PREDICTABLY THERE ARE NUMEROUS RUMORS FLOATING AROUND THE PEKING DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY THAT POLITBURTO AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENARY MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD IN THE PAST FEW DAYS (OR ARE NOW BEING HELD) TO FILL THE THREE VACANCIES ON THE PARTY STANDING COMMITTEE AND TO CONFIRM TENG HSIAO-PING AS CHOU EN-LAI'S SUCCESSOR IN THE PREMIERSHIP. A NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING IS RUMORED TO BE PLANNED FOR SOON AFTER CHOU'S FUNERAL TO FORMALIZE TENG'S ELEVATION. AS BEST WE HAVE BEEN ABLE THUS FAR TO DETERMINE, THESE RUMORS ARE BASED NOT ON "INSIDE INFORMATION" BUT ON SIGHTINGS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF RED FLAG LIMOUSINES OUTSIDE THE GREAT HALL SOME AFTERNOONS AND EVENINGS AND ON INFORMED SPECULATION HOW SUCH MATTERS WOULD BE MANAGED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRC STATE AND PARTY CONSTITUTIONS.

2. THE JANUARY 11 NCNA REPORT OF CHINESE LEADERS WHO PAID THEIR RESPECTS TO CHOU'S REMAINS LISTED POLITBURO MEMBERS
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BELOW THE STANDING COMMITTEE IN RANK ORDER, I.E.

CHIANG CHING, YAO WEN-YUAN, LI HSIEN-NIEN, ETC., THUS IMPLYING THAT THEY WOULD LOGICALLY BE IN LINE FOR ELEVATION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE. DIPLOMATS IN PEKING, HOWEVER, ARE SPECULATING THAT ALL THREE WILL BE PASSED OVER AND THAT CHI TENG-KUEI, HUA KUO-FENG, AND WANG TUNG-HSING OR CHEN HSI-LIEN WILL BE PROMOTED. CHU TEH AND CHANG CHUN-CHIAO COULD WELL BE MADE VICE CHAIRMEN OF THE PARTY AND SOME OR ALL OF THE ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO MAY BE MADE FULL MEMBERS. IF THIS SORT OF REORDERING OF THE POLITBURO DOES TAKE PLACE, THE ROMANIANS, AT LEAST, BELIEVE FOREIGN MINISTER CHVUO KUAN-HUA STANDS A GOOD CHANCE OF BEING ELEVATED TO POLITBURO STATUS AS EITHER A FULL OR ALTERNATE MEMBER.

3. ON THE STATE SIDE, MOST PEKING OBSERVERS ASSUME THAT TENG HSIAO-PING WILL SOON BE PROMOTED TO THE PREMIERSHIP. HE MAY TURN OVER HIS CHIEF OF STAFF HAT TO CHEN HSI-LIEN WHO WOULD GIVE UP HIS POSITION AS PEKING MILITARY REGION COMMANDER. CHANG CHUN-CHIAO IS EXPECTED TO BE PROMOTED TO FIRST VICE PREMIER, IN POSITION EVENTUALLY TO SUCCEED TENG IN THE PREMIERSHIP.

4. THE ABOVE, WE REPEAT, IS UNSUBSTANTIATED DIPLOMATIC SPECULATION. THAYER

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